



STATE OF  
CONNECTICUT  
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION



<http://www.cga.ct.gov/asianamerican/>

Testimony of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission before the Committee on  
Public Health  
March 02, 2011

**Re: HB 5608, AAC the Implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards in Health Care Settings**

Senators Gerratana and Slossberg, Representatives Ritter and Lyddy, and members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, I thank you for this opportunity to show support for H.B. 5608, AAC the Implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards in Health Care Settings.

According to the latest US Census data, 53% of 127,000 Asian Pacific Americans in Connecticut lack English Language Proficiency. Also, recent policy research suggests that language barriers in the health care setting can lead to problems such as delay or denial of services, issues with medication management, and underutilization of preventive services. Further, difficulty in communication also may limit clinicians' ability to understand patient symptoms and effectively provide treatment.

There is also reason to believe that the quality of communication between patients and providers positively correlates with the providers' ability to deliver better and safer care for limited English proficiency patients.

Language services, such as translation and interpretation, facilitates this communication and improves, I believe, the health care quality, the patient experience, and ultimately health outcomes.

From talking with representatives from Khmer Health Advocates, a 501 c 3 that caters to the healthcare needs of Cambodian refugees in Connecticut, I know that this bill would make it easier for this community to access the care that they need. Having fled a decade of war, starvation, and torture, most refugees suffer from severe PTSD and often are denied eligibility for government programs from Medicaid to Social Security Disability due to a lack of interpreters and support personnel who can help make a case for their healthcare needs.

HB 5608 recognizes the importance of interpreter services for limited English proficiency patients because it mandates healthcare organizations to offer and provide language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreter services, at no cost to the patient. For this reason, the APAAC supports HB 5608.

As you know the *APAAC is the only nonpartisan comprehensive state institution that evaluates laws and policies for their impact on the lives of Asian Pacific Americans (APA's) in Connecticut.* Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, state agencies, state leaders and the public on all matters concerning the status of APA's.

Thank you for this opportunity. I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have.